

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) An image generation system comprising:

a memory which stores a program and data for image generating; and

at least one processor which is connected to the memory and performs processing for image generating,

the processor performing:

depth cueing only for an object positioned within a depth cueing ~~area~~volume such that the color of the object being more distant from a viewpoint is made closer to a target color, the depth cueing ~~area~~volume being defined as a partial subset of a viewing volume based on a position of the viewpoint and includes a backward clipping plane of the viewing volume;

varying an alpha (α) value of the object on condition that the object is positioned within the depth cueing ~~area~~volume so that the object being more distant from the viewpoint becomes more transparent;

varying a depth cueing value for each vertex of the object based on a Z-value for each vertex of the object;

varying the alpha value for each vertex of the object based on the Z-value for each vertex of the object;

sorting objects within the depth cueing ~~area~~volume so that the objects are drawn in succession starting from an object nearest to the viewpoint; and

drawing an image viewable from a virtual camera in an object space in drawing order determined by the sorting processing while performing hidden-surface erasing based on a Z-buffer process for the objects within the depth cueing ~~area~~volume,

wherein the processor performs processing so that the depth cueing value increases based on an increase in the Z-value, the depth cueing value being a parameter for determining the strength of the depth cueing effect that results in the color of the object being brought closer to the target color as the Z-value increases.

2. (Previously Presented) The image generation system as defined in claim 1, the processor further performing:
drawing a most distant background including a color different from the target color.

3-9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently Amended) An image generation system comprising:
a memory which stores a program and data for image generating; and
at least one processor which is connected to the memory and performs processing for image generating,
the processor performing:
varying an alpha (α) value of an object depending on the distance between the object and a viewpoint only when the object is positioned within a depth cueing ~~area~~volume, the depth cueing ~~area~~volume being defined as a partial subset of a viewing volume based on a position of the viewpoint and includes a backward clipping plane of the viewing volume;

sorting objects within the depth cueing ~~area~~volume so that the objects are drawn in succession starting from an object nearest to the viewpoint; and

drawing an image viewable from a virtual camera in an object space in drawing order determined by the sorting processing while performing hidden-surface erasing based on a Z-buffer process for the objects within the depth cueing ~~area~~volume,

wherein the processor performs processing so that a depth cueing value

increases based on an increase in the Z-value, the depth cueing value being a parameter for determining the strength of the depth cueing effect that results in the color of the object being brought closer to the target color as the Z-value increases.

11. (Currently Amended) A computer readable information storage medium encoded with a computer program, the computer program comprising a processing routine for implementing:

depth cueing only for an object positioned within a depth cueing ~~area~~volume such that the color of the object being more distant from a viewpoint is made closer to a target color, the depth cueing ~~area~~volume being defined as a partial subset of a viewing volume based on a position of the viewpoint and includes a backward clipping plane of the viewing volume;

varying an alpha (α) value of the object on condition that the object is positioned within the depth cueing ~~area~~volume so that the object being more distant from the viewpoint becomes more transparent;

varying a depth cueing value for each vertex of the object based on a Z-value for each vertex of the object;

varying the alpha value for each vertex of the object based on the Z-value for each vertex of the object;

sorting objects within the depth cueing ~~area~~volume so that the objects are drawn in succession starting from an object nearest to the viewpoint; and

drawing an image viewable from a virtual camera in an object space in drawing order determined by the sorting processing while performing hidden-surface erasing based on a Z-buffer process for the objects within the depth cueing ~~area~~volume,

wherein the processing routine performs processing so that the depth cueing value increases based on an increase in the Z-value, the depth cueing value being a parameter

for determining the strength of the depth cueing effect that results in the color of the object being brought closer to the target color as the Z-value increases.

12. (Previously Presented) The computer readable information storage medium as defined in claim 11, further comprising a processing routine for implementing:

drawing a most distant background including a color different from the target color.

13-19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) A computer readable information storage medium encoded with a computer program, the computer program comprising a processing routine for implementing:

varying an alpha (α) value of an object depending on the distance between the object and a viewpoint only when the object is positioned within a depth cueing ~~area~~volume, the depth cueing ~~area~~volume being defined as a partial subset of a viewing volume based on a position of the viewpoint and includes a backward clipping plane of the viewing volume;

sorting objects within the depth cueing ~~area~~volume so that the objects are drawn in succession starting from an object nearest to the viewpoint; and

drawing an image viewable from a virtual camera in an object space in drawing order determined by the sorting processing while performing hidden-surface erasing based on a Z-buffer process for the objects within the depth cueing ~~area~~volume,

wherein the processing routine performs processing so that the depth cueing value increases based on an increase in the Z-value, the depth cueing value being a parameter for determining the strength of the depth cueing effect that results in the color of the object being brought closer to the target color as the Z-value increases.

21. (Currently Amended) An image generation method, performed by an image generation system having a processor, comprising:

depth cueing only for an object positioned within a depth cueing ~~area~~volume such that the color of the object being more distant from a viewpoint is made closer to a target color, the depth cueing ~~area~~volume being defined as a partial subset of a viewing volume based on a position of the viewpoint and includes a backward clipping plane of the viewing volume;

varying an alpha (α) value of the object on condition that the object is positioned within the depth cueing ~~area~~volume so that the object being more distant from the viewpoint becomes more transparent;

varying a depth cueing value for each vertex of the object based on a Z-value for each vertex of the object;

varying the alpha value for each vertex of the object based on the Z-value for each vertex of the object;

sorting objects within the depth cueing area so that the objects are drawn in succession starting from an object nearest to the viewpoint; and

drawing an image viewable from a virtual camera in an object space in drawing order determined by the sorting processing while performing hidden-surface erasing based on a Z-buffer process for the objects within the depth cueing ~~area~~volume,

wherein the depth cueing value increases based on an increase in the Z-value, the depth cueing value being a parameter for determining the strength of the depth cueing effect that results in the color of the object being brought closer to the target color as the Z-value increases, and the depth cueing, sorting and drawing steps are performed by the processor.

22. (Original) The image generation method as defined in claim 21, further comprising:

drawing a most distant background including a color different from the target

color.

23-26. (Canceled)

27. (Currently Amended) An image generation method, performed by an image generation system having a processor, comprising:

varying an alpha (α) value of an object depending on the distance between the object and a viewpoint only when the object is positioned within a depth cueing areavolume, the depth cueing areavolume being defined as a partial subset of a viewing volume based on a position of the viewpoint and includes a backward clipping plane of the viewing volume;

sorting objects within the depth cueing areavolume so that the objects is drawn sequentially from an object nearest to the viewpoint; and

drawing an image viewable from virtual camera in an object space in drawing order determined by the sorting processing while performing hidden-surface erasing based on Z-buffer process for the objects within the depth cueing areavolume,

wherein the depth cueing value increases based on an increase in the Z-value, the depth cueing value being a parameter for determining the strength of the depth cueing effect that results in the color of the object being brought closer to the target color as the Z-value increases, and the varying and drawing steps are performed by the processor.

28-33. (Canceled)